

Just the Facts...

Pesticides and Child Safety



A report by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences concerning pesticides in the diets of infants and children has generated renewed interest in protecting our children from harmful pesticide residues.

While we need to ensure that pesticide residues on food do not harm our children, an even greater danger exists with the storage and use of pesticides in our homes. While pesticides are useful in managing pest problem, they must be stored and handled properly.

A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report regarding pesticides used in and around the home revealed some significant findings:

- Almost half of all households with children under 5 years of age had at least one pesticide stored in an unlocked cabinet less than 4 feet off the ground (i.e., within the reach of children).
- Approximately 75 percent of households without children under 5 also store pesticides in an unlocked cabinet, less than 4 feet off the ground. This number is significant because 13 percent of all pesticide poisoning incidents involving children occur in homes other than the children's own.
- Bathrooms and kitchens were cited as the areas in the home most likely to have improperly stored pesticides. Examples of common household pesticides stored in these areas include roach sprays, chlorine bleach, kitchen and bath disinfectants (YES, these are considered pesticides), mice/rat poison, insect and wasp sprays, repellents and baits, and flea and tick shampoos and dips for pets. Other household pesticides include swimming pool chemicals and weed killers.

The following are some EPA recommendations for preventing accidental poisoning to children:

- Always store pesticides away from children's reach, in locked cabinets or garden sheds. Child-proof latches, available in hardware stores, may also be installed on cabinets.
- Read the label of the pesticide product first and follow the directions to the letter, including all precautions and restrictions.
- Before applying pesticides (indoors or outdoors), remove children and their toys as well as pets from the area. Keep them away until the pesticide has dried or as long as is recommended by the label. If you are interrupted while using a pesticide, be sure to put the container out of reach of children.
- Never transfer pesticides to other containers that children may associate with food or drink.
- Never place rodent or insect baits where small children can get to them.
- Use child-resistant packaging properly by closing the container tightly after use.

- Alert others to the potential hazard of pesticides, especially caregivers and grandparents.

● Teach children that pesticides are poisons, something they should not touch. Place warning sticker (e.g., Mr. *Yuk*) on pesticide containers.



● Keep the emergency telephone number of the **Poison Control Center** near your telephone: **(1-800-222-1222)**.

In case of an emergency, try to determine to what the child was exposed and what part of the body was affected, before you take action. The pesticide product label explains emergency treatments. Give the indicated first aid immediately before contacting the local poison control center, a physician, or 911. If you take your child to an emergency room, take the pesticide container along so that the physician can read the pesticide's ingredients. If first aid instructions are not available, follow these general guidelines:

● **Swallowed poison.** Induce vomiting **ONLY if emergency personnel on the phone tell you to do so**. It will depend on what the child has swallowed; some petroleum products or caustic poisons will cause damage if the child is made to vomit.

● **Poison in eye.** Eye membranes absorb pesticides faster than any other external part of the body; eye damage can occur in a few minutes with some types of pesticides. If poison splashes into an eye, hold the eyelid open and wash quickly and gently with clean running water from the tap or a gentle stream from a hose for at least 15 minutes. If possible, have someone else contact a Poison Control Center for you while the victim is being treated. Do not use eye drops or chemicals or drugs in the wash water.

● **Poison on skin.** If a pesticide splashes on the skin, drench the area with water and remove contaminated clothing. Wash the skin and hair thoroughly with soap and water. Later, discard contaminated clothing or thoroughly wash it separately from other laundry.

● **Inhaled poison.** Carry or drag the victim to fresh air immediately. If you think you need protection such as a respirator and one is not available to you, call the Fire Department and wait for emergency equipment before entering the area. Loosen the victim's tight clothing. If the victim's skin is blue or the victim has stopped breathing, give artificial respiration (if you know how) and call the rescue service for help. Open the doors and windows so no one else will be poisoned by the fumes.

Additional pesticide product information can be obtained from the **National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC)** at **1-800-858-7378**. The NPIC is a toll-free information service operated Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time (6:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time). The NPIC can also be contacted by FAX: **541-737-0761**; E-mail: npic@ace.orst.edu; Internet: <http://npic.orst.edu/>

**REMEMBER: PESTICIDES ARE NOT
JUST TOXIC TO PESTS!**